

## **The University of Scranton Religious Observance Policy: Students**

**I. Policy Statement:** The University of Scranton proudly acknowledges its Roman Catholic and Jesuit core values, and we are committed to a policy of reasonable accommodation of religious practices essential to other religious traditions. We celebrate the fact that we and our students come from diverse traditions, and we consider this fostering of an atmosphere of interreligious acceptance to be an important expression of our core values. We recognize that occasional conflicts in academic scheduling may arise, and we are committed to working with devout students to meet their religious needs. To this end, we ask any student who intends to participate in an essential religious practice that conflicts with an element of a course's academic work to inform their professor at the start of the semester. The student should also propose a means by which they intend to satisfy the required coursework. We will do our best to find a solution.

**II. Policy Application:** This policy applies to all students in both undergraduate and graduate programs.

**III. Policy and Procedures:**

The following provisions are meant to apply equitably to all religious groups and to provide opportunities to all to honor their religious commitments.

1. Any student absent from class in observance of a religious holy day shall not be penalized in any way for an examination or assignment missed during the period of absence. Absence in observance of a religious holy day does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the period of absence. Students who are absent on days of examinations or class assignments shall be offered a reasonable opportunity to make up the work without penalty, only if the student previously arranged to be absent. Nothing in this policy shall preclude faculty members from limiting the number of student absences to a reasonable number of absences for any reason. The faculty member has discretion to determine how the make-up obligation will be fulfilled.
  
2. The student is obligated to provide faculty members with notice of the dates they will be absent due to observance of religious holy day(s), preferably before the beginning of classes but no later than within a week of the last day to add into a class based on the university published academic calendar. For religious holy days that fall within the first three class days, students must provide faculty members with notice no later than two days before the absence. Missing a class due to travel plans associated with a particular religious holy day does not constitute an excused absence. Absences

due to observance of religious holy days that are not pre-arranged with the relevant faculty member within the first three class days may be considered unexcused, and the faculty member may therefore prevent the student from making up examinations or assignments missed during the period of absence.

3. Students are responsible for all material presented and all announcements made during class the student missed during the period of absence in observance of a religious holy day and to make up exams or quizzes scheduled on their observance day.
4. Faculty members are urged to remind students of their obligation to inform faculty members within the first three class days of any anticipated absences due to observance of religious holy days and include that information in the syllabus or course requirements document for that course.
5. To support this policy, a Multifaith Religious Observance Day list will be conjointly maintained by the Office of Equity and Diversity and the division of Mission and Ministry. Although not an exhaustive or exclusive listing, this list will include specific observances that may be important to students and other members of our campus community. This list is included as an appendix to this policy document.

#### **IV. Contact Information for this Policy**

Questions about this policy and its application may be directed to the Elizabeth Garcia, Executive Director, The Office of Equity and Diversity, [elizabeth.garcia2@scranton.edu](mailto:elizabeth.garcia2@scranton.edu) or (570) 941-6645, or to Daniel Cosacchi, Vice President for Mission and Ministries, [daniel.cosacchi@scranton.edu](mailto:daniel.cosacchi@scranton.edu) or 570-941-6651.

#### **V: Location of this Policy**

This policy is posted to the University Governance web site, Academic Policy web site, and other University publications.

#### **VI: Appendix: Multifaith Religious Observance List**

## **Appendix: Multifaith Religious Observance Day Calendar**

**About this Calendar:** This Calendar is a work in progress. It does not contain every observance that may be important to members of our community. Suggestions and corrections are welcome. If you have questions, corrections, or additions regarding this calendar, please contact the Vice President for Mission and Ministry or the Executive Director for the Office of Equity and Diversity.

**Observance varies within communities and traditions.** Not every member of a religious community will observe every date listed below for that community and there may be significant diversity in observance and even strong disagreement about observance within and between communities, even when such variance is not specified below.

**Terminology:** Many names and terms used in this calendar have multiple spellings and transliterations in English usage. Effort has been made to use widely recognized spellings. Some terminology is used for efficiency and clarity (such as references to "Western" or "Eastern" Christianity) even as we acknowledge that they do not perfectly reflect current understandings of religious history and demographics. We welcome feedback and suggestions for continuing to improve this resource.

**Lent:** Christian (Western/Gregorian)- Observances may include abstention from certain foods and drinks, often including meat. Traditions around fasting vary and include both daily and weekly practices.

**Magha Puja Day:** Buddhist, dates and observance vary by community

**Ayyám-i-Há:** Bahá'í

**Month of 'Alá':** Bahá'í, Observances include fasting by abstaining from food and drink from sunrise to sunset

**Maha Shivaratri:** Hindu

**Ramadan:** Muslim, Observances may include fasting with abstention from food and drink from sunrise to sunset, attendance at services, and additional prayer times

**Great Lent:** Christian (Eastern/Julian) Observances may include abstention from certain foods and drinks, often including meat. Traditions around fasting vary and include both daily and weekly practices.

**Spring Equinox:** Northern hemisphere, various traditions

**Naw-Rúz, Nowruz:** Bahá'í, Persian cultural, and additional communities

**Ostara:** Wiccan, Neo-Pagan and other communities

**Purim:** Jewish, specific evenings

Prepared by the offices of Mission and Ministry, and Equity and Diversity. Last updated May 2024.

**Palm Sunday:** Christian, Western/Gregorian

**Holi:** Hindu, South Asian cultural, dates vary. Student organizations often organize a Holi celebration for later in the semester closer to the arrival of warmer weather.

**Hola Mohalla:** Sikh

**Maundy Thursday:** Christian, Western/Gregorian

**Good Friday:** Christian, Western/Gregorian Observances may include attendance at services and fasting.

**Holy Saturday:** Christian, Western/Gregorian Observances may include fasting and abstention from celebratory gatherings

**Easter:** Christian, Western/Gregorian Observances include attendance at services on Saturday evening and/or Sunday

**Eid al-Fitr:** Muslim, Observances may include attendance at extended morning prayers and celebratory gatherings

**Chaitra Navaratri/Vasanta Navaratri:** Hindu, dates may vary, includes New Year's Day for the Hindu lunisolar calendar

**Vaisakhi:** Sikh

**Passover:** Jewish, Observances scheduled primarily on the first two and last two days, including seder gatherings the evenings and Mimouna. Dietary practices include abstention from leavened bread and other grain products.

**Theravada New Year:** Theravada New Year

**Beltane:** Wiccan, Neo-Pagan and other communities.

**Pascha/Easter:** Christian, Eastern/Julian, Observances include attendance at services

**Ascension of Jesus:** Christian (Western Liturgical) - Holy Day of Obligation for Roman Catholics

**Vesak, Buddha Jayanti, Buddha Purnima:** Buddhist, dates may vary by community

**Lag BaOmer:** Jewish,

**Sri Krishna Janmashtami:** Hindu

**Paryushana:** Jain,

Prepared by the offices of Mission and Ministry, and Equity and Diversity. Last updated May 2024.

**Ganesh Chaturthi:** Hindu,

**Autumnal Equinox:** Northern hemisphere, multiple traditions,

**Mawlid Nabi:** Muslim, observance varies significantly by community,

**Rosh Hashanah:** Jewish, Observance may include attendance at services including the first evening and during the following two days.

**Navpad Oli:** Jain,

**Yom Kippur:** Jewish, Observance may include fasting and attendance at evening and daytime services

**Sukkot:** Jewish,

**Shemini Atzeret:** Jewish,

**Simchat Torah:** Jewish,

**Diwali, Tihar, Lakshmi Puja, Bandi Chhor Divas (Sikh),** variety of observances

**Day of the Dead, Samhain, All Saints and All Souls:** Multiple overlapping religious traditions and cultures, including Christian and Wiccan/Neo-Pagan communities and Mexican and other Latine/x communities. Observance and duration vary and may include: **All Saints,** Christian, Holy Day of Obligation for attendance at Mass for Roman Catholics

**Birth of the Báb and The Birth of Bahá'u'lláh:** Bahá'í

**Guru Nanak Jayanti/Gurpurab:** Sikh,

**Day of the Covenant:** Bahá'í

**Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:** Bahá'í

**Advent:** Christian, primarily "Western" liturgical communities/Gregorian calendar

**Chalica:** Unitarian Universalist, observance varies

**St. Nicholas Day,** observance and date vary by community

**Winter Solstice:** Northern hemisphere, multiple traditions,

**Hanukkah:** Jewish,

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**Christmas Eve and Christmas:** Christian, primarily "Western" denominations and churches using a Gregorian calendar

**Kwanzaa,** African-American and African diaspora cultural observances including religious and spiritual traditions, observance varies

**This calendar has been reviewed by the Division of Mission and Ministry.**